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## **FOREWORD**

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 7, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Triumph Youth Services is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Director Joette Hayden is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Triumph Youth Services students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Triumph Youth Services.

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

**UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**250 East 500 South**

**P.O. Box 144200**

**Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**District 1**

Teresa L. Theurer  
66 Canterbury Circle  
Logan, UT 84321  
Phone: (435) 753-0740  
[teresatheurer@aol.com](mailto:teresatheurer@aol.com)

**District 2**

Greg W. Haws  
5841 West 4600 South  
Hooper, UT 84315  
Phone: (801) 985-7980  
[gregwhaws@aol.com](mailto:gregwhaws@aol.com)

**District 3**

Edward Dalton  
1323 Bryan Road  
Erda, UT 84074  
Phone: (435) 882-4498  
[edalton@erda.net](mailto:edalton@erda.net)

**District 4**

Joyce W. Richards  
930 East 5000 South  
Ogden, UT 84403  
Phone: (801) 479-5370  
[rjwrchrds@aol.com](mailto:rjwrchrds@aol.com)

**District 5**

Kim R. Burningham  
932 Canyon Crest Drive  
Bountiful, UT 84010  
Phone: (801) 292-9261  
[kreb84010@aol.com](mailto:krb84010@aol.com)

**District 6**

Tim Beagley  
3084 South 3550 West  
West Valley City, UT 84119  
Phone: (801) 969-6454  
[tbeagley@sisna.com](mailto:tbeagley@sisna.com)

**District 7**

John C. Pingree  
1389 Harvard Avenue  
Salt Lake City, UT 84105  
Phone: (801) 582-5635  
[jpingree@skhart.com](mailto:jpingree@skhart.com)

**District 8**

Janet A. Cannon  
5256 Holladay Blvd.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84117  
Phone: (801) 272-3516  
[jacannon@mstar2.net](mailto:jacannon@mstar2.net)

**District 9**

Denis R. Morrill  
6024 South 2200 West  
Taylorsville, UT 84118  
Phone: (801) 969-2334  
[dmorrill1@attbi.com](mailto:dmorrill1@attbi.com)

**District 10**

Laurel Brown  
5311 South Lucky Clover Ln  
Murray, UT 84123  
Phone: (801) 261-4221  
[dbrown@aros.net](mailto:dbrown@aros.net)

**District 11**

David L. Moss  
1964 Hawk Circle  
Sandy, UT 84092  
Phone: (801) 572-6144  
[tedamoss@msn.com](mailto:tedamoss@msn.com)

**District 12**

Mike Anderson  
455 East 200 North  
Lindon, UT 84042  
Phone: (801) 785-1212  
[mike@mbaconstruction.com](mailto:mike@mbaconstruction.com)

**District 13**

Linnea S. Barney  
1965 South Main Street  
Orem, UT 84058  
Phone: (801) 225-4149  
[ellessbee@attbi.com](mailto:ellessbee@attbi.com)

**District 14**

Dixie Allen  
1065 South 500 West  
Vernal, UT 84078  
Phone: (435) 789-0534  
[dixie.allen@uintah.net](mailto:dixie.allen@uintah.net)

**District 15**

Debra G. Roberts  
Box 1780  
Beaver, UT 84713  
Phone: (435) 438-5843  
[debrar@netutah.com](mailto:debrar@netutah.com)

**Pamela J. Atkinson\***

1123 South 20<sup>th</sup> East  
Salt Lake City, UT 84108  
Phone: (801) 583-2375  
[pa44@msn.com](mailto:pa44@msn.com)

**Steven O. Laing**

Executive Officer

**Sara V. Sinclair\***

1340 North 1500 East  
Logan, UT 84341-2851  
Phone: (435) 754-0216  
[saras@sunshineterrace.com](mailto:saras@sunshineterrace.com)

**Twila B. Affleck**

Secretary

**TRIUMPH YOUTH SERVICES**  
**SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

**Administration**

Richard Holmes.....Principal  
Brett Lyman.....Director  
Bruce Humphries.....Administrator  
Doug Long.....Program Coordinator  
Joette Hayden.....Director of Education

**Faculty**

Judy Bulloch  
Alan Pauole  
Joette Hayden

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Ralph Vander Heide, Ph.D., Accreditation Consultant, Chairperson

Heidi Mock, Intermountain Consulting and Educational Services

Judith Vander Heide, Accreditation Consultant

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING  
TRIUMPH YOUTH SERVICES**

**CHAPTER 1:**

**INTRODUCTION DESCRIBING THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT, THE SELF-  
IMPROVEMENT PLAN, CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL, AND OTHER  
RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

A team of three educators visited Triumph Youth Services, a special purpose school, on March 7, 2003, to complete a site evaluation as part of the requirements for accreditation by the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities (NASCU) and the State of Utah.

At 8:00 a.m. the Visiting Team met with the Director of Education, the Program Director (also a part owner of the school), and other members of the administration and School Improvement Team, including a student member of that team. After meeting for more than an hour, the Visiting Team proceeded to visit classes and to speak further with students and teachers. The team also met the second owner (and president of the company), the principal, and spoke with a therapist. In addition, the team visited the facility, which consists of two buildings (“houses”) and extensive acreage. The team lunched with the Director of Education and held a debriefing concerning the findings, commendations, and recommendations of the Visiting Team.

Triumph Youth Services, located in the tiny, rural community of Toquerville, Utah, is licensed by the State of Utah as an adolescent care facility to house 28 students under the Youth in Custody (YIC) program, and currently 28 boys (referred to as “youths”) are in attendance. They range in age from 12 to 18; all are court ordered to attend Triumph Youth Services due to various behavioral and academic issues. The average age of the youths is 16.

The school has a consulting (part-time) principal, director of education (full-time on site), program director, various other administrators, and two teachers. There are also aides who help with discipline, etc. at a ratio of one aide to every four students.

The self-study points out that “It is often extremely difficult to locate any state or district testing that might have been completed on our students, as most have been in numerous educational placements, detention centers, and alternative programs. This results in a very inconsistent educational history and unknown records.” Due to this inconsistency, the school places high value on its own “admit assessment” that includes administration of the Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery, the Glencoe Career Interest Survey, and

the Halstead Type and Temperament Test. The school finds that, due to the residential setting and the virtual one-on-one teaching and care, students often exhibit significant increase in motivation and desire to succeed.

All course curricula at Triumph meet the requirements of the general Utah State Core Curriculum. The self-study notes that there are “two multi-age classrooms that run simultaneously with an average of 14 students per class. Our five core academic subjects are taught on a traditional Monday thru Friday week with electives such as music, speech, and keyboarding spread out at varied times.” Direct teacher instruction is the main method of teaching. As already noted above, teaching assistants are employed at a ratio of 4:1. Students with special educational concerns meet on a one-to-one basis, if needed.

Youths at Triumph Youth Services are engaged in a highly structured program that combines education with therapeutic treatment. Therefore licensed therapists, as well as drug and alcohol counselors and paraprofessionals, are employed to work with the treatment aspects of the overall program.

The school worked on the self-study for many months, and by August 1, 2002, had the School Improvement Plan in place. This plan consists of three action plans that are aligned with the school’s goals for student learning. The school reports, “These three action plans have been designed to be simple to understand and to be usable by all staff involved with our education program.”

The dedication of school personnel at Triumph Youth Services to improvement is well stated in the following excerpt from the self-study: “Within the difficult school population of students we serve, we believe that our diligence and effort can have long term effects on a student’s individual life. It is with this in mind that we will continue to monitor quality, overcome barriers, and make our School Improvement Plan an on-going integral part of our daily teaching.”

In conducting its self-study, the school used as primary sources of guidance *School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance*, published by the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), and *Collaborating for Student Achievement*, the handbook of the State of Utah.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONSE TEAM'S PERSPECTIVE AS TO THE WORK OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN ADDRESSING EACH ASPECT OF THE SELF- STUDY REPORT**

#### **The School Profile:**

The profile of Triumph Youth Services adequately portrays the school population, environment, curriculum, and other relevant information about the school, with emphasis on its mission, philosophy, and educational direction. The school appears to have employed a systematic process of collecting and managing profile data.

Significant data about the youths was compiled, such as the fact that the average 10<sup>th</sup> grade student entering the program has attended four to six different “educational placements.” “It is then,” the profile states, “a more understandable fact that in 2001 only 19% of all Youth in Custody students of graduating age completed their high school diplomas.”

Profile data such as the above “has moved assessment and credit evaluation to the forefront of the program” at Triumph Youth Services.

The analysis of the profile data includes the identification of the school’s strengths and limitations and, to a great extent, provides a description of the “big picture” about the performance of the school. Profile information was used in drafting the school’s improvement planning process.

#### **Beliefs and Mission Statement:**

##### *Beliefs*

Triumph has four excellent belief statements that are clearly stated and free of jargon. All stakeholders and the general public can understand them. It appears that they express exactly what the school wants expressed, and that school personnel are willing to make a commitment to the direction indicated by these beliefs.

Salient among the beliefs is the first: “All students can learn if given the proper environment, care, and tools.” A second very important belief for this Youth in Custody school deals with helping the youngsters to build cooperative, trusting, and supportive relationships with parents and other persons. The third belief deals with the importance of a safe and positive classroom environment, and the fourth highlights the need for individualized teaching and testing.

These belief statements should be strong determinants of the quality and productivity of the instructional program at Triumph Youth Services.

### *Mission Statement*

The mission statement is reflective of what the school is about. However, the Visiting Team finds the statement to be far too long. The school is reminded of the NSSE guidelines: A mission statement should be concise, yet sufficiently comprehensive to reflect a collective vision that focuses on the role the school must assume in shaping the future. It should motivate, inspire, and give clear purpose and direction to the school.

Perhaps the first sentence of the lengthy mission statement is all that is needed to succinctly express the school's mission: "To provide an individualized educational program in which students with both educational and emotional needs can be served and thrive successfully."

The Visiting Team suggests that the mission statement be rewritten to conform to the above comments and suggestions. All school improvement goals, DRSLs, and self-evaluations should be directly aligned with a mission statement that serves to give a clear purpose to the planning process. The mission should reflect student learning as a top priority.

### **Desired Results for Student Learning:**

The self-study reports that school personnel worked cooperatively "to identify various needs of our students in a variety of means and ways. We have evaluated and processed what we believe are the most important areas of need in our school at this time. Our desired results for student learning (DRSLs) have been a direct result of this process."

To decide upon specific DRSLs school personnel "began by looking at current educational data related to the types of students whom we serve." The school also used information from the profiling process and surveys. NSSE's "Survey of Goals for Student Learning" was used "to help us identify the areas in which we need to improve learning and quality."

Triumph Youth Services decided on three DRSLs: (1) Expanding and Integrating Knowledge, (2) Personal and Social Responsibility, and (3) Effective Academic Skills. Several indicators of student achievement are listed for each DRSL in order to assess the progress of students. The school conducted a thorough analysis of the current level of students' achievement in these three areas of learning and reported the results in the self-study report.

It appears to the Visiting Team that a consensus-building process has been established for defining the DRSLs. The DRSLs are aligned with the beliefs and mission. The expectations for student learning are stated in clear, concise, and measurable goals.

### **Analysis of Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness:**

A holistic approach was evident that indicated integrated values and lifelong learning skills,

cross-curricular instruction, a variety of teaching methods, and student involvement, as well as some implementation of computers in instruction.

The school was quite thorough in its analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness. The analysis was conducted by “gathering information in a variety of ways and in using both formal and informal assessment tools.” NSSE’s “Survey of Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness” was the primary survey instrument.

It appears that all members of the faculty, support staff, and administration were involved in the review and analysis of I and O effectiveness. Priorities for improving the quality of the work of the school are based on analysis of the school’s strengths and limitations.

Identified strengths, as well as limitations, are listed in the self-study along with lists of supporting evidence.

### **Analysis of the Action Plan:**

The three action plans of the school improvement plan (SIP) are well defined, and each has a functional time line that is practical and achievable. Responsibilities have been assigned to specific school personnel to oversee the accomplishment of each action plan. All are currently being worked on.

Four or five steps are listed for the achievement of each of the three plans, as well as necessary materials and the evaluation procedures.

The three plans are directly aligned with the DRSLs. Indeed, the plans **are** the DRSLs: Personal and Social Responsibility, Expanding and Integrating Knowledge, and Effective Academic Skills. A specific goal statement is given for each plan. For example, the goal statement for Expanding and Integrating Knowledge is: “Students will demonstrate effective use of library skills.”

The SIP appears to be well thought out and should be effective if carried out as planned. The school improvement team at this small school is virtually all staff, and all appear to be involved (i.e., to “buy into” the plan). Strong leadership is evident for the implementation of the plan. It appears that adequate resources and follow-up support will be provided.

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**THE SCHOOL’S ADHERENCE TO THE NASCU STANDARDS FOR  
ACCREDITATION, THE STATE OF UTAH CORE CURRICULUM, AND THE  
UTAH LIFE SKILLS**

Triumph Youth Services, with minor deviations, meets the ten standards of the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities (NASCU). One deviation occurs in Standard Four—Library Media Program. The Visiting Team discussed this issue with the director of the school. Improvement should be forthcoming. Also, a part-time licensed guidance counselor is needed (Standard II—Student Personnel Services.)

The school bases all courses on the State of Utah Core Curriculum, and although it is not specifically stated in course descriptions or the self-study report, the Utah Life Skills are incorporated into the curriculum, especially in the areas of lifelong learning and character development. It is suggested that all school teaching and guidance (therapeutic) personnel, as well as students, be made aware of the seven Utah Life Skills.

**CHAPTER 4:**  
**GENERAL COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Commendations** include but are not limited to the following:

- It appears that all teachers and other affected constituents are aware of the self-improvement plan. School personnel understand their business, and strong leadership is evident.
- Individual attention is emphasized. In many cases such attention is in the form of an individualized education program (IEP).
- The profiling of students and proper academic placement is quite well done (but see recommendations).
- The school has quite well identified strengths and limitations.
- The school is commended for closely following the guidelines of the NSSE in preparing its self-study.
- The school improvement plan (SIP) with its three “action plans” is realistic and achievable as indicated. It appears that each action plan can be dealt with in depth.

- Attending “convocations” at SUU should help to achieve character-building objectives.
- The State of Utah’s Youth in Custody requirements are being met.
- Therapy sessions augment and help with the academic programs.
- The school makes great effort to align academic programs with the State Core Curriculum.
- A nurturing school culture is evident. Clearly, school personnel like the “boys.” Being nurtured and liked is probably a new experience for most of these students.
- The emphasis on gardening and other outside chores should help to develop responsibility, as should the priority given to personal cleanliness and maintaining clean bedrooms, etc. The Visiting Team noted that the boys’ rooms were “spick and span.”
- The boys are also responsible for picking up trash along a section of Interstate 15.

### **Recommendations:**

- As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, the mission statement needs to be revised as soon as possible.
- Even more data on student profiles would be useful in order to substantiate areas of strength and limitations.
- In connection with the above, it would be helpful to know how many students take specific standardized tests (the “Iowa” and others).
- The Visiting Team recognizes that obtaining follow-up (post-Triumph) information on students is difficult. However, the school is urged to attempt longitudinal, follow-up studies. Such information would be most useful in designing program improvements.
- In conjunction with the above, the school should make certain that students explore and clearly understand career options and post-Triumph opportunities.
- The school has a pressing need for an organizational chart. The visitor is quickly confused about who does what at Triumph and which title belongs to which person.
- The school needs to work harder on community building (as highlighted in the self-study).

- Increase the involvement of students in the self-study process.
- A part-time guidance counselor is needed, as noted in Section C.
- The self-study report could be improved through better graphing of pertinent data.
- As recognized by the school, better use of technology (e.g., computers, the Internet) would improve the program.
- Greater incorporation of fine arts into the school's program would be an excellent addition. The Visiting Team especially suggests arts such as dancing and acting that involve physical (kinetic) activity.
- There is a need for more inservice training of teachers.